Current and Ongoing Activities

Links Between HEI’s and Local Schools

The Maths, Stats & OR Network has been recently approached by the Department for Education and Skills to provide details on the kinds of activity that university mathematics staff offer to support mathematics teaching within local schools.

Some data has already been gathered on activity in this area from the HEFCE funded moremathsgrads (www.moremathsgrads.org.uk) study, of which the Network is a part, but we would like to hear from all our colleagues across the UK as to the types of activity that either they, or their department, are offering.

Following on from this, we are looking to produce a guide that highlights the good practice currently taking place in this area. We are able to offer funding for the production of a number of case studies that will form the basis of this guide. If you would like to contribute a case study, then please contact Michael Grove (M.J.Grove@bham.ac.uk).

CETL – MSOR Conference 2006

On the 11th and 12th September 2006, the Maths, Stats & OR Network will be hosting its first major conference in conjunction with the related Centres of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) at Loughborough University.

The conference will build upon the enormous success of the Helping Everyone Learn Mathematics event that ran in September 2005, and will offer the same mix of keynote speeches, plenary sessions, hands-on demonstrations, workshops and poster sessions. Further details are available by visiting the Network website, and a first announcement of this conference, including a call for abstracts, can be found on page 43 of this issue of MSOR Connections.

METAL Teaching and Learning Guides: Call for Authors

METAL is a HEFCE funded project that is developing three distinct resources to enhance the teaching and learning experience of lecturers and students in level-one mathematics for economics units/modules. The project is led by Nottingham Trent University in collaboration with Brunel University and the University of Portsmouth. The project outcomes will comprise:

- An online question bank of mathematics teaching and assessment materials specifically applied to the field of economics.
- Five interactive video units (covering 10 units of study) using streaming video, dynamic animation and student tracking to relate mathematical concepts to the field of economics.
- Ten teaching and learning guides that provide a selection of teaching activities (large and small groups) covering all aspects of level 1 mathematics for economics. The teaching and learning guides will present innovative and interactive approaches to teaching mathematical concepts to economics students. Topical flow charts will identify different ways to present concepts and to incorporate the question bank and video clips into teaching activities.

This call relates specifically to the project Teaching and Learning Guides. Interested lecturers are invited to author the following guides (up to a maximum of two):

Guide 1: Mathematical Review
Guide 2: Linear Equations
Guide 3: Linear Equations - Further Topics
Guide 4: Linear Programming
Guide 5: Finance & Growth
Guide 6: Non-Linear Equations
Guide 7: Differentiation
Guide 8: Partial Differentiation
Guide 9: Integration
Guide 10: Matrices

A fee of £1,200 will be paid for authoring the intellectual content of each guide (before tax and national insurance contributions).

Further details about the format for each guide, deadlines and the procedure for submitting proposals can be found at:

www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/projects/fdtl5/metal_call.htm

The closing date for proposals is Friday 10th March 2006.

Any additional queries about this call should be directed to Rebecca Taylor (METAL Project Leader) at Nottingham Trent University: (Rebecca.Taylor@NTU.ac.uk)
Do You Know Your Departmental Contact?

The Maths, Stats & OR Network aims to have a main contact within every UK Higher Education Mathematics, Statistics and Operation Research department. This is a two-way role whereby the Network communicates information relevant to the staff within the department via this contact, but equally, we like to hear from them with regard to what is happening in relation to learning, teaching and assessment. In addition, we also like to hear from our main contacts ways in which the Network could potentially offer support to their department as a whole. The departmental contact receives mailings and information in addition to that contained within MSOR Connections.

If you are not aware as to who your departmental main contact is, then please ask around. If your department does not have a main contact and you wish to nominate yourself for the role, then please contact M.J.Grove@bham.ac.uk, so that you can be added to our main contacts database. This will ensure that your department remains up to date with the latest developments in Network activity.

Forthcoming Events

The Higher Education Academy 2006 Annual Conference: The second annual conference of the Higher Education Academy takes place at the East Midlands Conference Centre, Nottingham, on the 3rd to the 5th July 2006, and focuses on all aspects relating to enhancing the student learning experience.

The 2006 Conference will focus upon three major themes:

- higher education policy;
- scholarship of teaching and learning in the disciplines;
- innovations to support the student learning experience;

The closing date for registrations is the 15th May 2006, and further details can be found by visiting:

www.heacademy.ac.uk/events/conference.htm

Network Workshops

The Maths Problem for Economics (29th March 2006, Bristol): For a while now, academics within Engineering, Physics and Computer Science have spoken of the maths problem within their discipline. However, with an increasing number of students starting university ‘mathematically unprepared’, the maths problem is becoming a concern for academics within the Economics subject area too. This one-day workshop, held at Burwalls Centre for Continuing Education (University of Bristol), seeks to clarify exactly what the maths problem is within the Economics discipline, establish what Mathematical & Statistical skills Economics students require, identify the support available, and so search for solutions to this worrying problem.

This event will be jointly facilitated by the Maths, Stats and OR Network and the Economics Network of the Higher Education Academy. A detailed programme, including details on how to register for this event, is available at:

http://mathstore.ac.uk/workshops

Dyscalculia and Dyslexia in Higher Education: ‘Forging the Future’ (5th April 2006, Loughborough): The second full day Dyscalculia and Dyslexia Interest Group conference will focus on ‘Forging the Future’ in the field of Dyscalculia, Dyslexia and Mathematics in Higher Education. There will be some main presentations and some smaller group sessions, which will run in parallel, providing an opportunity for discussion. The conference will be of interest to all those working with dyscalculic and dyslexic students in higher education, in particular, support tutors and academic staff.

9.30 am Registration
10.00 am Introduction and welcome
10.10 am Keynote Presentation:
  - Dyscalculia in Belgium: definition, prevalence, assessment and subtypes?
    Prof Dr Annemie Desoete,
    Ghent University, Belgium.
11.10 am Coffee/exhibition
11.35 am Optional Morning Sessions
12.30 pm Lunch/exhibition
1.30 pm Optional Afternoon Sessions
2.40 pm Tea/exhibition
3.05 pm Afternoon Presentations:
  - How Does Anxiety Influence Maths Performance and What Can We Do About It?
    David Sheffield,
    Staffordshire University.
  - To Be Confirmed
4.35 pm Closure

The fee for this one day event is £60 (fully inclusive), and for further details, including how to register, please visit:

http://mathstore.ac.uk/workshops/ddig2006

With a scheduled start at lunchtime on the 14 September, the Induction Course is aimed at people who have started teaching either Mathematics or Statistics with UK Higher Education institutions within the last three years, whether they are new graduates, from industry, or from outside of the UK. Its focus is upon the specific details and issues that arise when teaching either Mathematics or Statistics within HE, and as such, is the perfect complement to generic institutional teaching programmes. Topics to be covered include:

- Teaching and supporting learning;
- Design and planning of learning activities;
- Assessment and feedback;
- Systems to support learning;
- The computer environment;
- Sharing experience.

A provisional programme will be made available online shortly. For further details, including how to register for this event, please visit:

http://mathstore.ac.uk/workshops/induction2006

Supporting Postgraduates who teach Mathematics & Statistics (October, Various Locations): The Maths, Stats & OR Network will once again be offering a series of events to support postgraduate students within Mathematics and Statistics who teach as part of their programmes of study. The article on page 7- “The Skills needed by Postgraduates who teach Mathematics and Statistics” by Bill Cox describes the 2005 events.

The Network will be offering several identical regional events hosted by academics who have significant experience of teaching and learning within HE. These one-day events will cover issues such as planning and preparing for teaching, facilitating problem solving classes, encouraging participation and providing support, and assessing student work and providing feedback.

Following the popularity of these workshops in 2005, we are looking for institutions who would be willing to host these events in 2006. **If your department would be keen to have such an event hosted within it, then please contact Michael Grove (M.J.Grove@bham.ac.uk) to discuss details.**